

## LEARNING THE BASICS

### SERVICE COORDINATION

#### **Overview:**

Every individual who is determined eligible for services through the Division of Developmental Disabilities is entitled to receive service coordination. Support coordinators (formally known as service coordinator) help people with disabilities and their families identify and obtain needed services and supports. They also advocate for, monitor, and evaluate services along with the individuals, their families or guardians. A key role of the support coordinator is to assist people with the process and paperwork necessary to obtain services. The system of multiple agencies providing services to persons with disabilities can be complex and confusing. Support coordinators provide a “single point of entry” into services. Services and supports should be developed around the individual and family rather than trying to fit them into existing services merely because of availability. Support coordinators should utilize and strengthen formal and informal resources. Informal resources include family, friends, co-workers and neighbors (The Arc, 1990).

Support coordinators conduct the following activities:

- **Planning Supports:** Planning supports has two components: identifying the needs of the person being supported and creating an action plan that will support the person in meeting those needs.
- **Linking Resources:** Matching the unique support needs of individuals and families (identified in the plan) with resources in the community. Linking may involve researching existing resources, developing new resources, making referrals to collaborating agencies with information and follow-up support, writing service authorizations and coordinating federal, state and community programs to achieve necessary supports.
- **Quality Enhancement:** Monitoring and assessing the quality, timeliness and effectiveness of services and supports received through an ongoing review process.
- **Documentation:** Maintaining appropriate records in accordance with federal/state programs, policies, and procedures.
- **Transition/Transfer of Case Responsibility:** Ensuring, when a case is transferred either within the Regional Office or to another agency, that the transition does not interfere with services and supports and that all necessary information is shared with the new staff.
- **Personal Plan Mentoring:** Mentoring other support coordinators to improve their skills, by assisting with the facilitation and development of a person centered plan. This is usually done by experienced support coordinators or quality improvement staff, to help newer support coordinators to learn how to perform this crucial task.
- **Building Relationships:** Establishing strong, trusting relationships with the person being supported and the others involved with that person. This is probably the single most important element of quality service coordination. When this is present, the quality of supports and services improves.

- **Knowledge Enrichment:** Continuing one's education and professional growth. This includes attending conferences and seminars, and equips us to provide the most up-to-date information to people we support.
- **Networking:** Developing community relationships and community support systems which benefit the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. Networking is distinguished from linking resources in that networking is not related to specific supports for a particular individual or family.

The following are examples of activities that are NOT billable under TCM:

- **Direct Support:** Providing direct support to a person when necessary, such as helping move to a new apartment or transporting the person to a store or appointment.
- **Crisis Intervention:** Providing direct support to an individual during a crisis situation. This might include data collection, oversight or instruction.
- **Abuse Neglect Investigations:** Assisting in resolving situations of abuse or neglect. This is addressed in more detail elsewhere in this manual (refer to Section K).

Effective support coordinators have the following knowledge, skills and abilities:

- Good verbal and written communication skills and effective problem-solving abilities.
- Awareness of community resources and how to access them; knowledge of how to develop resources or services where none currently exist.
- Ability to seek out, organize and analyze information as needed within the context of unique individual and family circumstances.
- Ability to manage time effectively and adjust to the changing needs of individuals and families.
- Ability to self-motivate and self-direct, and foster collaboration with others.

Other kinds of knowledge, skills and abilities are desirable, but may be achieved while in the support coordinator role.

### **What do people with disabilities want?**

"We all want the same basic things out of life: a decent and comfortable place to call 'home', something meaningful to do during the day, some close friends with whom to share the good times and from whom we receive support in difficult times, and the opportunity to make our own decisions about things that will affect our personal lives. People with disabilities want these same basic things and are increasingly speaking up for themselves about what they want. And staff, family and State agency professionals are beginning to really listen."

*Excerpted from "Home, Sweet Home" by Susan L. Babin, IMPACT: Feature Issue on Supported Living (1995), published by the Institute on Community Integration.*

People with developmental disabilities benefit from comprehensive, long-term services. With such services, people with disabilities are often able to be more active, productive and independent, which benefits their communities as well.

## SUPPORT COORDINATOR PERSONAL SAFETY

### Overview:

Sensitivity to and concern for one's safety should be the number one priority in everyday life in our community. We have historically visited with individuals and families in their homes all over the state. It is with this in mind that we must look at the following guidelines and suggested procedures.

When visiting homes, even those homes of persons known to the support coordinator, the following should be practiced:

- A. Avoid homes in extremely isolated areas of the county or state (speak with your supervisor regarding what to do in these instances).
- B. Be aware of historically dangerous places in your area.
- C. When driving up to a home, look for dogs before getting out of the vehicle.
  - 1 Look for openings under the house or porch.
  - 2 Look for the fence layout: taller than normal fences, any holes, etc.
  - 3 Look on the porch for any pet items, e.g., chains, pet toys, etc.
- D. Look for multiple cars in the driveway or around the house.
- E. Be alert to people around the house.
- F. Be alert to strong chemical smells or odors.
- G. If you observe children having easy access to real guns, dangerous objects, or if you feel something is not right: **LEAVE THE HOME IMMEDIATELY AND DO NOT RETURN.**
- H. **If it is obvious that a child or children are in danger, please HOTLINE this information to the DSS Children's Division: 800-392-3738.**
- I. Set up the next meeting in a public place.
- J. Your local police or Sheriff's department is a good resource for additional training and consultation regarding personal and office safety.